

Praying like sons and daughters

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A few years ago, my daughter wanted a kitten. I do not remember why she wanted one, but she wanted one. As strongly as Sophia wanted a kitten, with the same strength, I did not want one. I remember having a brilliant thought. I told her, "Sophia, I do not even know where to find a kitten, so why don't we pray, and if God sends us a kitten, you can have it." She agreed, and I was sure that I had won the battle. After all, God probably would not go out of his way to give a child a kitten, right? She began to pray. Every time our family would pray, she would ask for a kitten. After about two weeks, as we were walking around our neighborhood, a lady who we did not even know, came out and spoke to us. She told us that her cat had just had kittens, and wondered if Sophia might want a kitten. Seriously, I was speechless. Sophia was thrilled. God had answered her prayer. I was shocked, amazed and even ashamed. I should have known better. Our Father cares about the smallest details of our life. The faith of a child had corrected Sophia's Pastor and missionary father. Forever, that lesson is burned into my mind. It was a gift for me as much as one for her.

Our heavenly Father does not care if you are a Pastor, a plumber, a student or a housewife. If you are His child, you are His child. Children do not think about anything, they just ask. What you see is what you get. They do not worry about anything they say to their parents. How can we learn to pray like a child? God's Son, Jesus, is our example. Jesus was known for saying many things that the people in his time thought were very controversial. He claimed to be able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days. He spoke like he knew Abraham, and talked about dead people as just being asleep. He constantly said and did things that his closest followers did not understand. But the wildest thing that the Jewish people heard him consistently say was that God was his Father. My Father this and my Father that. No one prayed, talked to or even had the boldness to speak with such intimacy toward God. Jesus lived as a child holding on to the hand of his Father. Though he was the spiritually strongest person who ever lived, he depended on his Father more than any man who had ever walked the earth. Jesus taught

relationship over ritual. He taught intimacy over hypocrisy. He taught prayer as children and not life as spiritually fatherless. He did more than teach it. He modeled it. In Luke 11, we learn how to pray like a child. Our focus is not to explain every detail of every sentence of his prayer, but to see a helicopter view of it and learn about our relationship with God.

I see three things Jesus teaches and implies in Luke 11:1-13 to be able to pray like a child:

1. To pray like a child, you have to see God as your Father (v. 1-4).
2. To pray like a child, you have to be persistent (v. 5-10).
3. To pray like a child, you have to be confident in your Father (v. 11-13).

1. To pray like a child, you have to see God as your Father

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation."

It is amazing that Jesus would pray and the disciples were so impacted by hearing and watching that they cannot help but say, "teach us to do that". Humans are always focused on technique. We want to know how to do things. Look at the "how to" videos on YouTube. You can learn how to do just about anything.

The disciples are asking for a "how to" lesson from Jesus. He immediately begins to teach them not with postures or poses. He does not say that if you scream that will get closer to heaven. He does not even teach them to add to the end of every sentence, "in Jesus name". The first word they are taught to pray is "Father". This word needs to be first. It needs to be first because it will affect the rest of the prayer. If the definition of prayer is talking to God, then Jesus wants to tell us the secret to his rich and powerful prayer life does not begin with a technique, but with a relationship. It does not begin with "how to pray" but "whom to pray to".

Just imagine if the prayer would have started with a different word like "judge". That is a true statement. God is a judge. What if he would have started with "Lord"? There is nothing wrong with that name either. What if he would have started with "Yahweh", the name of God revealed in the burning bush? That would have been true as well. As a matter of fact, please pray those names. However, that is not

the name Jesus taught. Whichever name Jesus chose would be the name that most controlled the way we talk to God. So the word “father” is not important in itself. It is important because it changes the whole way people approach God. But if Jesus can teach us one tip that will transform our prayer life, it is to see God as our heavenly **Father**.

The two most common relationships in the world are business and family. If I go to a car dealership and tell them I want a car, the salesman is not going to give it to me. We both understand that the relationship is a business one. If I say, "I want you to give me for free that BMW", he will not even understand what I mean. Because we both know that our relationship is based on a transaction. You give me money, and I give you a car. It is a business relationship.

Many of us have a business relationship with God. We offer our service, our money and our time in exchange for protection, help, healing or some other services from God. So if your way of relating to God is through a business relationship, then you will pray like that, and when something does not go the way you want it you just assume that God was not happy with your end of the business deal. You think, maybe God is unhappy because I missed church. Perhaps, God is disappointed in my spiritual performance, and so he does not give me what I asked for. Even worse, sometimes people complain that God is not doing his part of the deal. I will never forget a man coming to me and telling me how faithful he was to God, and he was angry and confused with God for allowing him to go through a hard time.

God refuses to do business with his children because it would be very bad for them. He gave them their breath. He made them smart. He planned where they would live. He allowed them to be privileged enough to know about him. They deserve punishment, but he gave them his son for free. He owes them nothing, and we all owe him everything. If prayer is going to work, it must be done from a family relationship, not a business relationship. Let us imagine the car dealer was our father. Now when we go to ask for the car, we can know that it does not matter how much money we have. Our request comes from a father/child relationship. Do you understand? Do not try to earn God's favor. Rest in what Jesus has done for you, and start praying to your Father.

2. To pray like a child you have to be persistent.

⁵ And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?’ ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

The parable about prayer may seem a little strange to modern ears. Knocking on the door at midnight for bread may seem like an odd thing for us to do, but it was not strange for them. In the Middle East guests are very important. One of the main ways of knowing good people from bad people in the middle eastern mindset was by their hospitality. In the Jewish mind, Abraham and Lot were righteous examples of showing hospitality in Genesis 18-19. The man who is grumpy when his door gets knocked on is meant to be seen as the strange one. If you were a hearer in Jesus time, you would have thought that the man who refused to get up was a bad person. Did he not care about guests? What a bad man, who will not help his neighbor to be a good host.

So what is Jesus point? The point is that through persistence, even a grumpy, mean person will give you what you need to be righteous. If persistence pays off with the unloving man, how much more will it pay off with the infinitely loving God? Our Father is not grumpy or mean, so how much more will give to his children when they persist in asking things that will glorify him. A child is persistent like that. Children don't think it is strange to ask for something 500 times. They know what they want, and they just speak. Ask for whatever you need to do God's will. Ask and do not stop asking. Persistence is key to growing in prayer, because our Father not only changes situations through prayer, but just as importantly, he changes us through prayer. As we ask for what it takes to be the people God wants us to be, we are being changed.

3. To pray like a child you have to be confident in your Father.

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Verse 11 shows us that Jesus has not left the topic of asking a good father. Good parents know what is good for their children. If we are honest, we can say that many if not most of our prayers seem to be answered in unexpected ways. We prayed for healing, and God gave us the grace to be sick. We prayed for our spouse to be better, and God points out ways we can improve. We ask him to save people, and he saves the people we were least expecting. So many times, we stop praying because we are not getting the exact thing what we are wanting. We are blind to see the way in which we were asking for scorpions and God is giving us eggs We are asking for serpents, thinking it is fish. God sees all things. He knows what we need. So a truly rich prayer life will only be found in our confidence in God's ability to give the best. Jesus reminds us that our Father knows what is best for us. At the end of the teaching, Jesus makes a very powerful statement:

¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Compared to God we are evil parents. He is such a great Father! Why do you carry so much anxiety? Why are you living constantly under stress? Learn to pray small, powerful momentary prayers. Say to God, "Give me wisdom" or "Help me respond in love". The key to a rich prayer life is confidence in the goodness of your Father. Jesus says, "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Our Father wants us to be like him. So he sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Even though he is always with us, there are certain weaknesses we have and temptations we face that we need a supernatural grace to overcome. We need the intervention of the Holy Spirit in a special way. My prayer is that as we live as children, we will know our Father in greater ways and experience the power of his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit produces much fruit in our lives. When we pray for holiness, love, joy or peace, we are praying for the Holy Spirit in a way. We are asking God to produce those things in us. But that power is only for the children of God.

If you are here today and are not sure you are a child of God, God has a message for you:

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13)

God has come to us. He has sent His son to pay for all the sins we have committed. Jesus death makes us clean again. He gives us a new name and a new home. We are no longer spiritually fatherless, but become sons and daughters. You cannot earn it, so it makes you humble. You cannot deserve it. When you place your faith in Jesus, you become a son or daughter of God. It changes everything.

Discussion questions:

1. Share one trial, difficulty or hardship you are going through this time in your life.
2. How does seeing God as our Father, encourage you to pray about this hardship?
3. On page 3, there is a section about business and family relationships. How can you personally grow in a Father/child relationship with God?
4. The sermon says "Persistence is key to growing in prayer, because our Father not only changes situations through prayer but just as importantly, he changes us through prayer." How has prayer changed you?
5. Share how you have felt or feel about unanswered prayers. How does this contrast with Luke 11:11-13?
6. Take time to pray right now for your hardship.